

# The Sacred Art of Listening

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- \* Silence is a fundamental quality of listening. What is your personal response to silence? What is your communal experience with silence? What makes you comfortable or uncomfortable with silence?
- \* Reflection is the result of listening to your soul and discerning the wisdom of your inner voice. Describe a time when you experienced your inner voice. What did you learn about yourself? The Divine? How do you recognize the voice of God at work in your life?
- \* Presence allows us to listen with our hearts, giving our full attention to another. Think about and discuss a time when someone was *really* listening to you. They weren't thinking about what they were going to say next, where they were going to go next, or their next chore on the to-do list. They were simply there, present with you. What did that feel like? How often do you experience this type of listening? When have you provided this kind of listening to someone else? What did it feel like to be present for another person?
- \* One of the keys to learning the sacred art of listening is making a commitment to practice every day. Discuss how you can incorporate a daily practice into your life. What are the benefits of doing so?
- \* The cultural and religious diversity in our communities calls for a way of listening that transcends words and belief systems. Describe your personal vision of what this form of listening requires. What is the value in listening to others' stories? What can you gain by listening? What do you give?
- \* Deeper connections come from discovering what we have in common. Discuss how you might use listening as a way to discover how we are alike, rather than how we are different.
- \* How do you listen with respect to someone you disagree with? What are some of the ways you can prepare yourself to do so? What are some helpful phrases to use that show that you are listening, but do not convey agreement? Make a list of these phrases, then try them out with each other. What do you think? Are they effective? Gentle? Thoughtful? Unkind? Insensitive? Explore the many ways your simple phrases can be interpreted and work on improving them so their points are very clear.
- \* Who would you like to impact with the quality of your listening?